

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BUENOS 01721 121715Z

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05

NIC-01 /061 W

----- 012400

R 121635Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0285

S E C R E T BUENOS AIRES 1721

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, ELAB, AR

SUBJECT: POWER CONFLICTS WITHIN PERONIST MOVEMENT AND GOVERNMENT

REF: A. BA 1306 AND B. BA 1425

1. ON FEB 26 FEDERAL POLICE TRIED TO FORCE THEIR WAY INTO THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE METAL WORKERS UNION (UOM). SINCE UOM LEADER LORENZO MIGUEL HAD EXCHANGED INVECTIVES WITH INTERIOR MINISTER ROCAMORA ONLY A FEW DAYS BEFORE, MOST OBSERVERS ASSUMED THE POLICE RAID HAD BEEN ORDERED BY THE LATTER TO SHOW THE FORMER WHO WAS BOSS. A FEW DAYS LATER, ROCAMORA SAID THE WHOLE THING HAD BEEN A MISUNDERSTANDING AND THAT HE AND LORENZO MIGUEL HAD SIMPLY HAD A FAMILY SPAT OF NO POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE (SEE REF B).

2. SEVERAL POLITICAL OBSERVERS HERE POINTED OUT AT THE TIME THAT WHILE ROCAMORA MIGHT HAVE GIVEN THE INITIAL ORDER, FEDERAL POLICE CHIEF MARGARIDE IS A LOPEZ REGA PROTEGE AND HENCE WOULD CERTAINLY HAVE CHECKED WITH THE LATTER BEFORE CARRYING IT OUT. THUS, LOPEZ REGA, WHO IS ALSO INVOLVED IN A POWER CONFLICT WITH LORENZO MIGUEL, MUST HAVE AT LEAST TACITLY APPROVED THE RAID.

3. ADDING A MACHIAVELLIAN NOTE TO THE BIZARRE EPISODE, THE EMBASSY HAS NOW BEEN TOLD BY A SOURCE VERY CLOSE TO

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PAGE 02 BUENOS 01721 121715Z

INTERIOR MINISTER ROCAMORA THAT THE LATTER DID NOT RPT

NOT ORDER THE POLICE RAID. IN FACT, HE DID NOT KNOW ABOUT IT UNTIL AFTER THE FACT. THE ORDER REPORTEDLY CAME DIRECTLY FROM LOPEZ REGA TO MARGARIDE. LOPEZ REGA'S OBJECTIVES WERE CLEAR: A) TO THREATEN ONE OPPONENT WITH FORCE, AND B) TO SEE TO IT THAT THE BLAME WAS PUBLICLY ATTACHED TO STILL ANOTHER OPPONENT. FOR ALL PRACTICAL PURPOSES, THE TACTIC WORKED. LORENZO MIGUEL IS AWARE THAT THE RAID WAS ORDERED BY LOPEZ REGA, BUT HE IS CHOOSING TO PUT THE BLAME ON ROCAMORA, POSSIBLY BECAUSE HE SEES THE LATTER AS THE MORE VULNERABLE OF THE TWO TARGETS.

4. FOR HIS PART, ROCAMORA WAS PRIVATELY FURIOUS, BUT PUBLICLY COULD DO LITTLE MORE THAN TRY TO PASS THE INCIDENT OFF AS A MISTAKE, SINCE HE COULD NOT PUBLICLY ADMIT THE RAID HAD BEEN ORDERED BEHIND HIS BACK UNLESS HE HAD THE POLITICAL CLOUT TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT-I.E. TO FIRE MARGARIDE. ROCAMORA DOES NOT HAVE THAT MUCH CLOUT AND KNOWS IT. (HE HAS BEEN UNABLE AS YET TO GET RID OF FEDERAL INTERVENTOR LACABANNE DESPITE THE LATTER'S VULNERABLE FLANK RESULTING FROM THE STILL UNEXPLAINED FAILURE OF THE PROVINCIAL POLICE IN THE EGAN CASE.) HENCE, ROCAMORA HAD TO SIT ON HIS HANDS.

5. THIS DOES NOT NECESSARILY IMPLY THAT ROCAMORA IS ELIMINATED AS A POWER CONTENDER, HOWEVER. NOR DOES HIS DISPUTE WITH LORENZO MIGUEL MEAN THAT A ZERO-SUM CONFLICT BETWEEN HIM AND LABOR IS INEVITABLE. AS SUGGESTED IN REF A, THE OTHER LABOR STRONG MAN, CASILDO HERRERAS, HAD PUT OUT LINES TO ROCAMORA PRIOR TO THE LATTER'S TIFF WITH LORENZO MIGUEL. THE SAME SOURCE REFERRED TO IN PARA THREE HAS INFORMED EMBOFF THAT LAST WEEK HE WAS ASKED BY HERRERAS TO ACT AS AN EMISSARY TO ROCAMORA WITH A VIEW TO ENCOURAGING THE LATTER TO DEFINE HIS POSITION VIS-A-VIS LABOR, AND SPECIFICALLY VIS-A-VIS HERRERAS. SOURCE BELIEVED THERE WAS AT LEAST AN EVEN CHANCE THAT ROCAMORA WOULD RESPOND POSITIVELY AND REALISTICALLY AND END UP AS AN ALLY OF HERRERAS (WHO IS NOT RPT NOT A LOPEZ REGA TOADY) AGAINST BOTH LORENZO MIGUEL AND LOPEZ REGA.

6. COMMENT: THE EPISODE IS INTERESTING AS AN ILLUSTRATION
SECRET

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PAGE 03 BUENOS 01721 121715Z

OF THE FACT THAT POWER STRUGGLE GOING ON NOW IS NOT TWO-SIDED, OR EVEN TRIANGULAR; RATHER, IT IS MULTI-AIDED, PERHAPS EVEN OCTAGONAL. FURTHER, IT POINTS UP THE BACKBITING AND INTRIGUE THAT ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY PREVALENT WITHIN THE PERONIST MOVEMENT--AND THE GOVERNMENT--AS THE GLUE AT THE TOP OF STRUCTURE BEGINS TO LOSE ITS ADHESIVENESS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DISPUTES, POLITICAL LEADERS, LABOR UNIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 MAR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BUENOS01721
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750087-0328
From: BUENOS AIRES
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750360/aaaacbim.tel
Line Count: 114
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 BA 1306, 75 AND BA 1425
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <03 SEP 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <18 DEC 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: POWER CONFLICTS WITHIN PERONIST MOVEMENT AND GOVERNMENT
TAGS: PINT, ELAB, AR, (ROCAMORA, ALBERTO LUIS), (MIGUEL, LORENZO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006